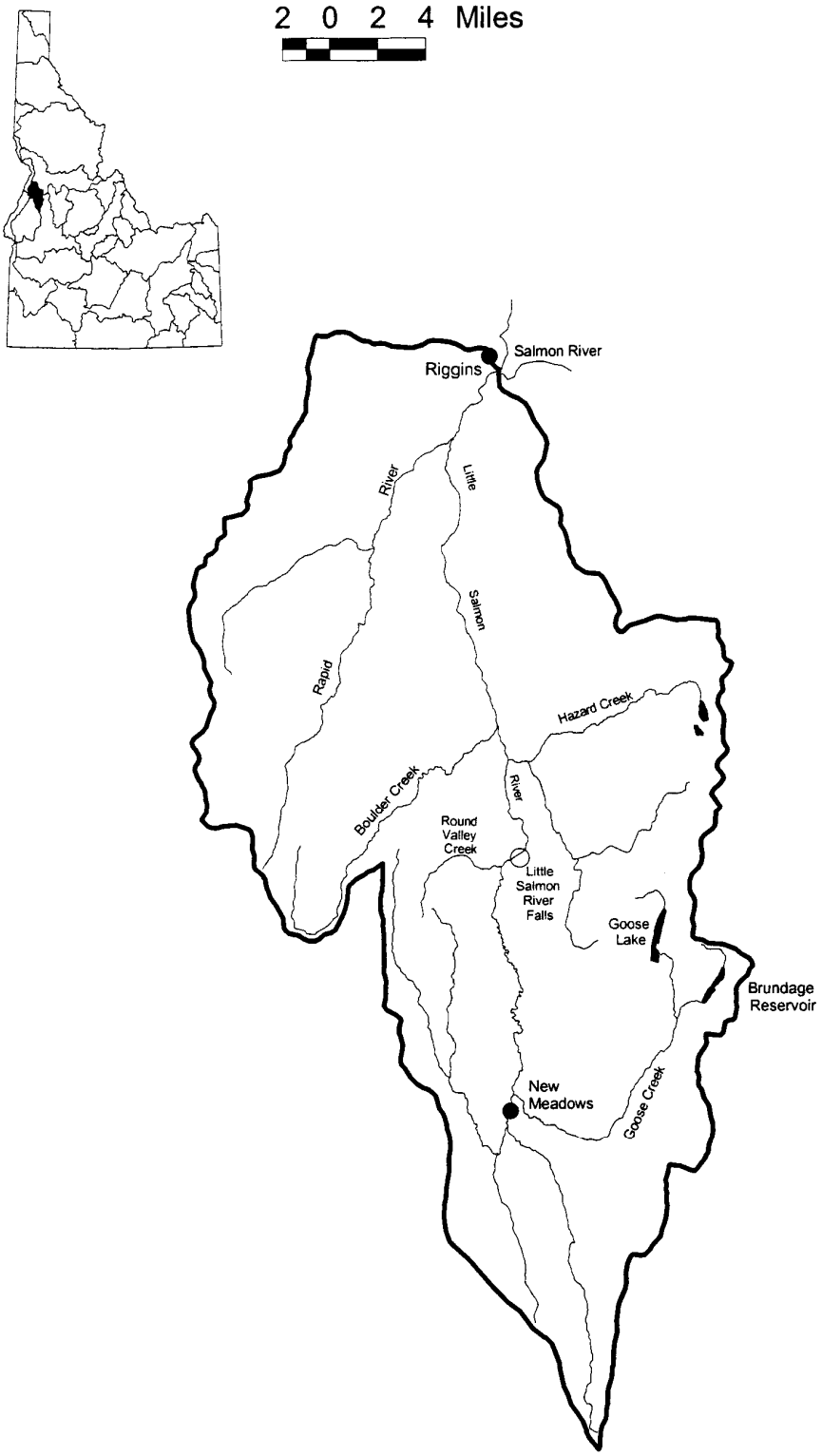
Little Salmon River Drainage



8. LITTLE SALMON RIVER DRAINAGE

A. Overview

The Little Salmon River heads in the Meadows Valley in Adams County and flows northward to its confluence with the Salmon River at Riggins. Major tributaries include Goose Creek, Hazard Creek, Boulder Creek, and Rapid River. Major lakes and reservoirs include Fish (Mud) Lake, Goose Lake, Brundage Reservoir, and Hazard Lake. The drainage area is 516 square miles and includes elevations from 1,760 feet msl at the mouth to 9,000 feet in the Seven Devils Mountains and Hazard Creek drainages. Discharge at Riggins averages 854 cfs with extremes of 98 cfs to 12,600 cfs recorded in the past ten years.

Most of the drainage is forest lands, including wilderness and unroaded areas. There are 15,300 acres of irrigated agricultural lands, primarily hay meadows and pastures, in the drainage.

The Little Salmon River drainage from its mouth to and including Hazard Creek supports spring chinook salmon, steelhead trout, rainbow trout, cutthroat trout, bull trout, brook trout, mountain whitefish, and nongame species. Cascades prevent anadromous fish species from upstream migration beyond Round Valley Creek. Above Round Valley Creek, the Little Salmon River is a low gradient, meandering stream with high gradient tributaries.

The Rapid River drainage is extremely important to Idaho's anadromous fish program. Upper Rapid River is classified as wilderness, and this drainage provides essential, good quality spawning and rearing habitat for salmon and steelhead to maintain natural production. It also supplies high-quality water for Idaho Power Company's Rapid River Hatchery which spawns and rears spring chinook.

A harvestable surplus of hatchery adult spring chinook salmon return to Rapid River in most years. These fish are utilized for treaty and nontreaty fisheries. Anadromous management in the Little Salmon River drainage emphasizes hatchery production to provide spring chinook for harvest as the first priority. Rapid River Hatchery has also supplied excess eggs for a number of programs outside of the drainage, such as the Clearwater River.

Little Salmon River steelhead plants are designed to provide harvest opportunity on hatchery steelhead in the mainstem Salmon near Riggins and in the Little Salmon. It is the only Salmon River tributary open during steelhead season.

The cascades passage barrier in the Little Salmon River at river mile 21 has been considered for removal in the Northwest Power Planning Council's Fish and Wildlife Program. However, because of the current emphasis on improving mainstem Snake and Columbia migrant survival rates in underseeded habitats, and the need to improve water and riparian quality above the barrier, its removal will again not be accomplished during this five-year period. We will seek public input regarding anadromous and resident fish potentials and preference.

Brundage Reservoir and Lake Serene are managed for trophy fishing opportunities. Goose and Hazard lakes are very popular recreation areas and provide general fishing opportunity in high elevation settings for many anglers.

B. Objectives and Programs

1. Objective: Maximize harvest and harvest opportunity on hatchery-produced salmon and steelhead contingent upon achieving hatchery escapement needs.

   Program: Continue to evaluate adult salmon and steelhead harvest to develop seasons that ensure hatchery escapement needs are met, minimize surplus fish into the hatchery, and maximize the catch. Continue to ad-clip hatchery chinook and steelhead and harvest only marked fish. Structure chinook seasons to ensure all anglers an opportunity to harvest fair shares of the run surplus.

   Objective: Improve water quality and fish habitat upstream of the barriers near Round Valley Creek.

   Program: Work with the landowners to participate in state and federal programs to improve grazing, irrigation, and farming practices to improve riparian condition and water quality.

Drainage: LITTLE SALMON RIVER

Water	Miles/acre	Fishery			Management Direction
		Type	Species Present	Management	
Little Salmon River and tributaries, mouth to Round Valley Creek (except Rapid River)	104/	Coldwater/ Anadromous	Chinook salmon Steelhead	Anadromous	Manage primarily for sport fishing opportunity on hatchery produced salmon and steelhead. Allow for required escapement of spring chinook salmon to Rapid River Hatchery. Allow harvest of excess hatchery chinook salmon should predictors so indicate. Monitor any harvest fishery closely through creel survey. Continue development and enhancement of terminal steelhead fishery through smolt releases. Release both A and B type smolts to allow return of larger fish for anglers and to base the fishery on 2 different year-classes of steelhead.
			Bull trout	Conservation	Closed to harvest.
			Rainbow trout Brook trout Cutthroat trout Mountain whitefish	General	Enhance populations of wild trout by improving water quality throughout the drainage. Provide put-and-take trout fishery on residualized steelhead smolts and limited plants at campgrounds.
Rapid River and tributaries from mouth to headwaters	35/	Coldwater/ Anadromous	Chinook salmon Steelhead	Conservation	Closed to adult harvest. Enhance spring chinook salmon and steelhead trout returns to Rapid River trap and allow natural escapement to maximize seeding of spawning and rearing habitat. Cooperate with USFS to monitor population and life history.
			Bull trout	Conservation	Closed to harvest.
			Rainbow trout Mountain whitefish	Wild trout	Maintain and improve existing habitat to sustain/enhance wild salmonid stocks.
Little Salmon River and tributaries from Round Valley Creek to headwaters	89/	Coldwater	Rainbow trout Cutthroat trout Brook trout	Wild trout	Pursue aggressive program of habitat rehabilitation with landowners and federal/state agencies. Improve water quality and riparian vegetation throughout this river section. Seek public input regarding desired fishing opportunity.
			Bull trout	Conservation	Closed to harvest.
Fish (Mud) Lake	/30	Coldwater	Cutthroat trout	Wild trout	Eliminate use for broodstock rearing and egg-taking
Brundage Reservoir	/270	Coldwater	Rainbow trout Cutthroat trout	Trophy	Maintain trophy trout fishery through annual supplementation with rainbow trout or cutthroat trout strains. Maintain catch rate of 1.0 fish/hour. Restrict harvest of fish less than 20 inches.

Goose Lake	/520	Coldwater	Rainbow trout Brook trout Cutthroat trout	General	Experiment with specific rainbow trout and cutthroat trout strains to improve fishery. Supplement with catchable trout.
Hazard Lake	/90	Coldwater	Brook trout Rainbow trout Cutthroat trout Rainbow trout x cutthroat trout hybrids Bull trout	General Conservation	Collect baseline fishery data to assess status of system. Develop improved trout fishery to enhance catch rates and sizes of fish. Augment Main Hazard Lake with catchable rainbow trout. Closed to harvest.
Lake Serene	/10	Coldwater	Brook Trout Rainbow trout	Trophy	Maintain trophy fishing opportunity.
Other alpine lakes (42)	/1,000	Coldwater	Rainbow trout Cutthroat trout Golden trout Brook trout Arctic grayling Bull trout	General Conservation	Maintenance stocking on a three-year rotational basis with salmonid fingerlings to provide species diversity. Collect baseline data on lakes in cooperation with USFS to improve fishing. Seek ways to rehabilitate or improve stunted brook trout lakes. Closed to harvest.